DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 269 106 JC 860 257

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TITLE Four Models for Increasing Student Retention at the Community College of Denver.
INSTITUTION Denver Community Coll., CO. Admissions & Advising Center.
PUB DATE Aug 85
NOTE 42p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Persistence; Adult Students; College Attendance; College Freshmen; Community Colleges; *Dropout Prevention; Dropout Research; *High Risk Students; Program Development; Questionnaires; *School Holding Power; School Surveys; Student Attitudes; *Student Attrition; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students; Withdrawal (Education)

ABSTRACT

Drawing from a review of the literature on issues related to student retention and attrition, and research on student attitudes toward the Community College of Denver (CCD), this report suggests four models for student retention programs for different two-year college student groups. Following introductory material on the project, a literature review is presented, covering areas such as factors influencing retention/attrition and ways in which the academic and social climate of an institution can facilitate retention. The next section reports on the methodology and findings of the CCD study, which involved a follow-up of students entering the college in 1983 to determine their attitudes toward their experiences at CCD and factors that may have influenced retention. Finally, the four retention models are presented, focusing on: (1) students with undeclared majors/unclear goals; (2) students who are academically underprepared for college; (3) students entering college for the first time; and (4) returning adult students. The models delineate objectives, activities, staffing needs, scheduling issues, matters related to instructional materials, and implementation considerations. (RO)

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ED269106

Four Models for Increasing Student Retention at the Community College of Denver

by

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Submitted to

Admissions & Advising Center
Community College of Denver
Dr. Joyce Parks, Director

JC 860 257

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions in Colorado are entering a new period of uncertainty. This is due to the Colorado legislature redefinition of the functions of higher education and the establishment of standards for admission at the various colleges and universities. The Community College of Denver, in addition to this adjustment, is entering an era of independence from a central administration. The College will now be able to establish its own direction independently of other community colleges.

During the period of independence, the college will be forced to evaluate goals, programs, services, and to identify the student population it can best serve. There will be a need to develop innovative marketing strategies to remain competitive in the metropolitan areas as well as to attract and retain qualified students.

Current efforts at identifying student retention issues and developing solutions will ensure the vitality of the institution, and meet the educational and vocational needs of the community. It should also be an important part in the developing marketing strategies for the college.

This study was designed to develop a model for retention based on research relating to student attitudes toward the Community College of Denver, and related literature on issues of student retention and attrition. The study will be presented as follows: review of related literature, Denver Auraria Community College Retention Survey, and a model for retention.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A model for student retention at the Community College of Denver will be developed utilizing information gathered from a review of pertinent literature and student responses from a survey. The literature review will consist of writing on factors influencing attrition and retention, identifying target groups for retention efforts, and implementing strategies for retention.

Velasquez and Velasquez (1984) and Loomis (1984) completed literature review for the Community College of Denver (CCD) current study into retention at the Auraria campus. These summaries will be presented as written by the authors. The works of R. Don Walleri and Beal and Noel will complete the review. The next section of the study will focus on the results of a student retention survey conducted at CCD in July 1985.

Velasquez and Velasquez sought to identify research which indicate factors mediating and influencing attrition and retention of students, especially minority students enrolled in two year colleges. The summary follows. Some of the factors which have been identified in the literature as influencing attrition/retention are:

- high school grades
- aptitude tests (ACT, SAT)
- study habits
- secondary school curricula
- sex
- age
- parental income
- parental education
- student's educational and occupational aspirations
- attendance at two year colleges
- major
- financial aid
- academic ability
- marital status
- employment

Research on college attrition/retention is difficult to interpret because findings are often contradictory and many studies simply investigate demogra-

phic data or are single variable studies. Much of what is known about college dropouts must be examined with caution because the research is limited particularly for the two year colleges and minority students attending those colleges.

The major research on student attrition/retention has been conducted at four year colleges with majority students. This observation points to one of the complexities associated with attrition/retention at two year colleges. The scarcity of two year college attrition/retention studies may be due to the open door policy of two year colleges. The open door policy makes it difficult to conceptualize variables contributing to attrition/retention because of the wide range of student abilities and other student characteristics. Four year colleges on the other hand are more selective of their students and make it easier to define attrition/retention variables. The complexity of the attrition/retention research problem is further compounded by the likelihood that the population being studied are members of minority groups. Data on minority group students tends to be incomplete and is replete with fluctuations in the definition of terms. Due to the paucity of data from two year colleges and the limitations inherent in minority student data it will be necessary to extrapolate attrition/retention factors from four year college findings when there are no two year college studies available.

Some of the major findings have been summarized by Pantages and Creedon (1978). The most frequently cited reasons are related to academics: poor grades, boredom with courses, poor high school record, irrelevance of course work and incompatibility with career goals. Financial reasons are more frequently cited by minorities and women, and least cited by males and those in technical schools. Uncertainty about educational and occupational goals, lack of interest or motivation, and poor study skills are related to academic

problems and cited most often by early dropouts. Personal and emotional factors, as well as adjustment difficulties contribute to dropping out for a number of students, with marriage being cited more frequently by women and minorities. Interestingly, counselors feel these social-psychological reasons are the most important factors contributing to attrition. Early dropouts complain about the college's social or academic environment as being the primary reason for leaving, however, these do not appear to be important factors for later dropouts. Full-time employment seems to interfere with two-year college students completing their education. In addition, two-year college students expressed more need for non-academic experience along with a lesser interest in obtaining a degree. Findings on age and sex factors have produced conflicting results as did parental income and education. Some studies have shown that Blacks have slightly higher dropout rates than whites, but when academic ability and SES are controlled the dropout rates are similar. Being married decreases men's chances of dropping out but increases women's chances. A high GPA and class rank are the best predictors of persistence in school. In addition, students with poor study habits are more likely to dropout. Data has consistently shown that students needing personal counseling are more likely to drop but especially at open admissions colleges. Students attending two year colleges not only have a higher probability of dropping out, but are predisposed to do so because of lower expectations. Although the availability of financial aid helps mitigate financial problems, lack of ecnomic resources can interfere with motivation and contribute to dropping out. Parental and spouse's monetary support significantly affect college persistence. Work-study enhanced Black's retention whereas loans did not seem to enhance any student's incentive to persist. Other types of financial aid have conflicting effects. Pepo and Fetters (1978) concluded that

neither scholarships (grants) nor loans had significant effects on retention for students at two year or other colleges. Several studies have indicated that the interaction between faculty and students is one of the most important determinants of student retention.

Despite the vast body of research on factors contributing to attrition/ retention, very few solutions have been identified. The main conclusion to draw from the existing research is that it is impossible to isolate singular causes for attrition. However, some general conclusions can be formulated which show that improved student retention is possible and that programs can be formulated for individual colleges.

Loomis' review was completed with the view of providing college administrators, especially at the Community College of Denver, clues for determining student retention issues at Auraria. Loomis reports as follows. Most of the literature concerning the retention of college students has been published since the mid-1970's, when the "baby boom" students of the late 1940's and early 1950's would have graduated from college. The literature points out the need for institutions to develop their own retention studies (1984). Basically, the research shows the reasons for retention and attrition vary from institution to institution.

The beginnings of concern for student retention was centered around studies of 'dropouts' in the 1950's. Such research continued into the next three decades as Astin, Marsh, Tinto, and Bianchi and Bean concluded that prior academic achievement and aptitude are the most useful variables in predicting dropouts from college (1980). Research done by Tinto, Pantages and Creedon (1978), and Bianchi and Bean (1980) revealed that students that voluntarily withdrew had higher aptitude and achievement levels than those that continued their education to graduation (1975). While personality variables

are not consistently correlated with dropping out of college, family background variables such as socio-economic status and parental level of education have been found to be moderately related (1966). While such patterns are interesting, college administrators have had to face up to the fact that they can do little to influence personality or family background variables.

The areas that college administrators can have an impact on are those of the academic and social climates of their institutions. Tinto found that voluntary withdrawal was determined in part by a student's integration into the social and academic systems of a college (1975). Academic integration includes: grade performance; intellectual development; perception of faculty concern for teaching and student development; and informal contacts with faculty concerning academic intellectual and career matters. Social integration includes: extra-curricular activities; peer group relationships; and informal interactions with faculty concerning personal concerns or to merely socialize. Pascarella and Terenzini (1979) found that if a student was poorly integrated into one of the two systems, they would persist, providing a high degree of integration in the other system has been achieved. They further stated that institutional policies and programs may be key determinants of freshman year persistence. Specific attention to the quality of relationships with faculty for men and both faculty and peer relationships for women was found to be critically important for reducing voluntary withdrawal.

Some of the most recent literature on retention points out a need for an institution and its administration to justify retention. For example, why should an institution try and retain a student? Dressel and Simpson proposed that "the term "retention" implies a holding power, an adhesiveness, a quality or a set of characteristics of an institution such that an individual initially attracted to it will maintain the association and regard it as both

desirable and profitable (1983). Dressel surveyed 258 colleges and universities to assess how their information they gathered from their retention programs was used. The primary uses were (1) administrative: enrollment projection were used for program planning; and (2) "add on" activities not directly related to "education," such as orientation, changes in advising, counseling services, peer counseling, study skills and practicum experiences. Only four programs mentioned the evaluation of the quality of academic offerings. In the area of academic program development, college administrators have often overlooked information on students' decisions to stay, leave, transfer, drop in or out of college (1983).

R. Dan Walleri's study (1981) focused on student retention and attrition at the community college. It is one of the few studies concerned with this student population. Walleri acknowledges the wealth of literature on retention and attrition as well as the dearth of studies concerning community colleges. The wealth of the literature is concerned with four year colleges and have limited applicability to community colleges. Nevertheless, they point out important clues to a community college efforts at retaining students.

The major limitation of the literature and its relevance to community college is the definition of retention. Retention is commonly defined as on-time graduation. This definition is relevant only to a portion of community college students; those in vocational preparation programs where the degree is terminal. It is not meaningful to lower division transfer students and special programs and community education students. Retention for these students can only be formulated in terms of student objectives. Most community college students do not obtain a degree from the college. This in and of itself does not suggest a retention problem.

Walleri indicates clearly that there are different types of retention (dropping out of college) and attrition (withdrawing from courses). The wide range of student reasons for attending the community college should be considered when attempting to differentiate and define the two. All student withdrawal is not necessarily bad. There are times when it should be encouraged, e.g. vocational students who obtain employment in the field of study prior to graduation. Institutions should be concerned when it is harmful to institutional vitality and student vocational and educational aspirations. However, identification of when it is harmful is a major problem.

The complexity of student reasons for attending community colleges and the wide range of programs offered at these institutions prompts Walleri to suggest defining, for community colleges, student retention in terms of program completion, course completion, and student attainment of educational and career objectives. He acknowledges that students change objectives thus making measurement of retention difficult.

Despite institutional efforts to affect attrition, the researcher reluctantly acknowledges that it is not within a college's ability to prevent most attrition; probably no more than ten percent. This is because withdrawal reasons are more often related to issues independent of the college such as health, finances, family, personal, conflict between work and class schedule. The primary task in matters of retention is to identify those students whom the college can better serve to achieve educational and vocational objectives.

Walleri's review of the literature covers the main works cited by both Velasquez and Loomis. He pursued certain areas in greater depth than both these authors. The areas worth noting here are peer group influence, financial aid, and institutional characteristics which affect retention.

The influence and the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the institutional environment and a student's peer group are the most important psychological factors in college persistence. Many researchers agree that a student's ability to endure dissatisfaction is more important than the actual degree of dissatisfaction.

The type and amount of financial aid seem to be associated with persistence. While finances are a concern to some, the student's concern over finances is more important than the actual degree of hardship. Financial aid is associated with the degree of concern. Larger grants and scholarships and part-time on-campus employment (work-study) have a positive association with persistence. Loans and financial aid packages the opposite effect. Loans, particularly among men, lead to anxiety over the mounting debt.

Students at community colleges attend because of low cost, convenient location, interest in particular programs. Most other institutional characteristics are secondary. Nevertheless, orientation, counseling, academic advising, and developmental education are valued and contribute to student persistence.

The literature generally supports the involvement of students in campus life as important for retention. This is not the case for part-time, an increasing population at community colleges. Administrative removal of obstacles for withdrawal and facilitation of re-enrollment have a positive effect on retaining this group.

Walleri identifies part-time as the group more likely to define the character of the community college. This group of whom we know very little, is least likely to be involved in academic and campus life, more likely to be affected by an institution's retention efforts. It is therefore important to distinguish part-time students pursuing long term objectives from those

attending community education and occupational upgrading courses. The latter, by nature of the courses, attend in a discontinuous manner.

Retention strategies in the community college must be multi-faceted and tailored to the specific needs of identifiable groups within the general student population. This identification becomes crucial, particularly after recognizing that students who view education as an end in itself, and not a means to an end (e.g. a job) are more likely to persist in their studies at the community college.

Beal and Noel (1980) reported on the process of researching the indicators of increased retention, defining responsive target groups and indicators of target areas of change. Their work, part of the 1980 study of the American College Testing Program and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, is a major contributor to the understanding of retention in higher education.

The researchers support the conclusions which identified students most likely to drop out of post secondary institutions. These students are new to higher education, underprepared, undecided about college major or career plans, returning adults, economically disadvantaged, or first generation college students. Each of these target groups need a specific action program to address the needs of the group. They report:

> High-risk students who are academically underprepared or have a low academic performance are most likely to be reached by improved academic support and learning skills programs, early warning systems, improved advising, and counseling, in that order.
>
> New students, on the other hand, will benefit from orientation programs, learning skills programs, academic support systems and improved advising.
>
> Students who are undecided about their majors or careers respond best to improved advising, career assistance, and orientation programs, in that order.

Returning adults realize the greatest gains from special orientation programs, peer counseling, career assistance and faculty-staff development programs.

Beal and Noel conclude that institutions working to improve retention show evidence of change in academic stimulation, personal future building and involvement experiences. They stressed the necessity of each campus devising specific programs for their unique situation. Also noted was the need to alter programs conceived for other campuses to the requirements of specific campuses. A listing of change indicators identified by the authors follows: (indicators with an asterisk are those currently in-place at CCD).

Learning Support Centers and Activities

*A learning center offering a learning lab, peer tutoring, mini-courses and orientation.

*A credit-bearing learning lab for developmental English and Reading courses.

*A study skills program, with workshops and opportunities for individualized help.

*A noncredit writing lab.

*Individual academic tutoring in 22 department subject areas.

A two day summer workshop, followed by weekly group meetings with peer advisors during the first nine weeks of the fall semester to cover basic skills.

An individual needs program with comprehensive support services.

A two semester hour elective course taught by peer counselors who receive course skills training.

Enriched Academic Advising

A restructured academic advising program, involving intensive work with faculty.

A central advising center staffed by 25 volunteer faculty members.

Faculty advising with a peer advisor to assist the faculty member.

Faculty advisors specially trained to counsel freshmen.

Assignment of senior faculty members to honor students for hands-on research experiences.

An academic exploration program and a decentralized advising system.

Twelve undergraduate advisement centers (one for each college).

A student academic advisement manual combined with a handbook for advisors.

A new advising/counseling "early warning" procedure to follow up all students with low midterm grades.

*A student advisement center for undecided freshmen and all students with academic questions.

Faculty awareness and development activities

A seminar on college teaching available for graduate credit for faculty.

"Let's Talk Teaching," a monthly faculty forum discussing teaching excellences and improvement of instruction.

An ongoing faculty instructional development program consisting of seminars, workshops, a faculty development library and a newsletter.

Two-day summer workshops for faculty on effective teaching and evaluation of teaching.

A faculty development program supported by outside funds.

All-college seminars on retention-attrition recruitment.

A one-week faculty workshop on retention and advisement.

Faculty advising workshops relating advising to retention.

*A campus-wide review and evaluation of advising.

Ongoing workshops to identify students likely to drop out.

Personal future building experiences consist of career assistance programs and improved orientation activities.

Career Assistance Programs

A freshman workshop on career planning, study skills, leadership and assertiveness.

Summer workshops on college and career planning.

Development of a "Career Pathfinder Guide" to assist students in career planning.

*A noncredit 14 hour course on "Where Do I Go from Here with My Life?"

Improved Orientation Activities

*Summer orientation, testing and placement, followed by consultation with freshmen and their parents.

A freshman overnight experience in a wilderness environment.

A new student colloquium: One-hour sessions, once a week.

A special orientation designed for transfer students.

A class that explores the purpose of the liberal arts and the research resources of the college.

Special workshops for nontraditional students, including motivation, values clarification, self-esteem, shyness.

A semester-long mentor program with a student-faculty team in weekly one-and-one-half hour sessions.

A series of life-skills workshops to assist students who live off-campus.

Summary - Conclusions

1. Retention efforts should not attempt to achieve one hundred percent success.
2. Institutions working on retention need to identify high risk students; these include new students to higher education, returning adults; students with unclear majors or career goals; academically underprepared students.
3. It is impossible to isolate a single cause for attrition - no simple solution exists.
4. A student's feeling of belonging to an institution will enhance retention.

5. Retention is improved by directing recruiting efforts to students whom the institution is best equipped to serve.
6. There are different types of retention and attrition - the problem is to identify under what circumstances is attrition harmful in terms of institutional vitality and students' educational and vocational aspirations.
7. Graduation as a criteria for retention is inappropriate for defining retention. Retention should probably be in terms of student achieving their educational and vocational goals.
8. It is not within a college's capability to prevent most attrition.
9. The goal of retention efforts is to help students define and achieve their educational/vocational objectives.
10. When students view education as a means to an end, attrition rates are likely to increase.
11. Emphasis should be placed early on proper placement, orientation, counseling, academic advising, and developmental education.
12. After success in first term, persistence is often a function of how deeply involved a student becomes in campus and academic life.
13. Part time students are least likely to use counseling services, become involved in campus/academic life, and most likely to withdraw.
14. Retention efforts at community colleges should be multi-faceted and tailored to specific needs of identifiable groups within the general student population.
15. The research goal of retention studies should be to identify which types of students are most likely to withdraw.
16. Successful retention development activities areas include academic assistance, personal future building, and involvement experiences.

Denver Auraria Community College

Retention Survey

History

During the fall semester registration in 1983, 999 students were recorded as completing a questionnaire. The questionnaire was to determine their goals and attitudes toward the Community College of Denver. The program objective was to follow a sample of 250 students to subsequently determine their responses to the student experience at Auraria, and also to follow those who withdrew from school to determine the reasons. The first follow-up began in July 1985, the second is currently under way (August 1985).

The narrative will focus on the 250 follow-ups. This will include sampling procedures, follow-up, response rate, original data analysis plan, current data analysis plan, findings, and discussion of the findings.

Sampling

An initial random sample of 250 students from the original 999 was selected. This sample was rejected because it was not representative, e.g. minorities were not included. A subsequent sample was selected controlling for ethnicity, part time employment, and full time employment. This sample of 250 was deemed representative, and thus useable.

It was determined after the mailing of the questionnaire that there was a major error. During the process of selecting a random sample for a dropout survey of the 1983 population, it was discovered that data was missing for a large number listed in the population. The original 999 population was inaccurate, therefore, the 250 sample drawn was not representative. It was not possible to recall the questionnaire already mailed and to start the process over. This was due in part to time constraints. The data collected is of

limited use in making determinations of the population which numbered actually 813.

Returns

Seventeen percent of the sample returned the questionnaire. Forty two of the forty three responses received were useable. Follow-up telephone calls were made twice to the entire 250 sample. A large number of students have moved or disconnected the telephones. Several questionnaires were returned because the postman was unable to deliver. This is consistent with the research efforts of Edward Caller, a faculty member of CCD. Mr. Caller's experience with surveys at CCD showed a similar problem. He suggested that in the future, research like this should be conducted right after the semester ends or during the semester, and that the college try to maintain more current address records of the students.

The low return is probably due to the time of year, non-deliverable questionnaires, and extreme low student interest in the survey. The latter is highlighted by the fact that forty of the forty two useable responses were from students currently attending CCD.

Original Data Analysis Plan

The original data analysis plan was to use a SPSSX cross-tabulation program. The program would provide a joint frequency distribution of cases according to two or more classificatory variables. The joint frequency distributions would be analyzed to determine the strength of the associations using chi-square, Phi, or Cramer's V. The precise tool for variable association would be determined after examining the size of the respondent pool. Measures of frequencies, central tendency, and possibly variance would also be determined.

The variables selected for study of associations are listed below (QB = item number on questionnaire).

1.	Financial problems caused me to leave	I was satisfied with the services at the Financial Aid Office.
2.	Financial problems caused me to leave	The Financial Aid Office was accessible and helpful.
3.	The financial aid I received was adequate for tuition and fees.	The Financial Aid Office was accessible and helpful.
4.	I was certain about my major field when I entered DACC.	I achieved my educational goals at DACC.
5.	I was not satisfied with the quality of my courses at DACC.	I was satisfied with the teaching style of my professors at DACC.
6.	I was not satisfied with the quality of my courses at DACC.	My professors had the ability to communicate course content.
7.	I was not satisfied with the quality of my courses at DACC.	My professors should have been more helpful to me.
8.	I was not satisfied with the quality of my courses at DACC.	I was satisfied with the professionalism of the faculty at DACC.
9.	I achieved my educational goals at DACC.	I received useful advice on what courses to take at DACC.
10.	I received useful advice on what courses to take at DACC.	The course offerings at DACC were not adequate.
11.	I received useful advice on what courses to take at DACC.	The academic programs at DACC are too difficult.
12.	Working student/full-time	I managed my time well when I attended DACC.
13.	Working student/part-time	I managed my time well when I attended DACC.
14.	Non-working student	I managed my time well when I attended DACC.
15.	Working student/full-time	Time spent at my job detracted from achieving my educational goals at DACC.
16.	Working student/part-time	Time spent at my job detracted from achieving my educational goals at DACC.
17.	Non-working student	Time spent at my job detracted from achieving my educational goals at DACC.

Three way cross tabs will include:

18.	Financial problems caused me to leave college.	The financial aid I received was adequate for tuition and fees.	The financial aid office was accessible and helpful.
19.	I received useful advice on what courses to take at DACC.	The course offerings at DACC were not adequate.	The academic programs are too difficult.
20.	I received useful advice on what courses to take at DACC.	I was satisfied with the quality of the career counseling services.	The selection of courses was adequate for my educational program.

21.	I received useful advice on what courses to take at DACC.	I was satisfied with the quality of the career counseling services.	The courses I took did not help me meet my career goals.
22.	I received useful advice on what courses to take at DACC.	The selection of courses was adequate for my educational program.	I was satisfied with the services at the Admissions and Advising Center.
23.	I received useful advice on what courses to take at DACC.	The courses I took at DACC did not help me meet my career goals.	I was satisfied with the services at the Admissions and Advising Center.

Current Data Analysis Plan

The very low return was deemed unsuitable for the original data analysis plan. Generalizations would not be possible, not only due to the low rate of return, but also because the original sample was incorrect. A plan to analyze the data using frequency of responses to each item, to collapse the columns in Part B from strongly disagree, disagree, strongly agree, agree, and does not apply was devised. This will be reported in percentages of responses and absolute numbers.

Findings

N = 42

DENVER AURARIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE RETENTION SURVEY

PART A. General Information

		Yes	No
1.	Social Security Number: _____		
2.	Did you work while attending DACC?	33	6
	If "yes":		
	Full-time 22		
	Part-time 7		
	Off-Campus 4		
	Work Study 1		
	Other: _____		
3.	Were there any changes in your marital status while attending DACC?	5	37

	Yes	No
4. Were there any changes in your family status (for instance, did you have a child) during your attendance at DACC?	6	36
5. Were there any changes in your employment status while attending DACC?	13	29

PART B.

(SD) = Strongly Disagree
(D) = Disagree
(A) = Agree
(SA) = Strongly Agree
(NA) = Not Applicable
(NR) = No Response

	SD	D	A	SA	NA	NR
1. I was certain about my major field when I entered DACC.	2	10	13	12	4	1
2. I achieved my educational goals at DACC.	5	14	9	7	7	
3. I was not satisfied with the quality of my courses at DACC.	8	18	10	2	4	
4. Registration and enrollment procedures at DACC were easily accomplished.	6	7	20	7	2	
5. I was satisfied with the teaching style of my professors at DACC.	3	7	22	9		1
6. My professors had the ability to communicate course content.	4	8	19	11		
7. My professors should have been more helpful to me.	2	19	13	5	3	
8. I was satisfied with the professionalism of the faculty at DACC.	1	8	22	10	1	
9. I received useful advice on what courses to take at DACC.	2	9	15	6	10	
10. Financial problems caused me to leave college.	13	7	4	4	14	
11. Other students or student organizations provided support that helped me as I attended DACC.	5	11	9	1	14	2

		SD	D	A	SA	NA	NR
12.	I was satisfied with quality of the career counseling services I received at DACC.	4	12	11	2	13	
13.	I was satisfied with the services at the:						
	a. Registrar's Office	3	1	26	9	3	
	b. Cashier's Office	-	-	30	8	4	
	c. Admissions and Advising	4	2	25	6	5	
	d. Financial Aid Office	4	5	9	8	16	
	e. Library		2	19	10	11	
	f. Bookstore		2	23	13	14	
	g. Dean of Students Office	2	3	12	6	18	
14.	My family provided support that helped me as I attended DACC.	6	4	15	9	8	
15.	My friends outside of college provided support that helped me as I attended DACC.	-	7	15	8	12	
16.	The course offerings at DACC were not adequate.	6	21	9	4	2	
17.	The academic programs at DACC are too difficult.	15	21	2	1	2	1
18.	Faculty members provided support that helped me as I attended DACC.	3	8	16	8	5	2
19.	I managed my time well when I attended DACC.	3	6	18	10	3	2
20.	The selection of courses was adequate for my educational program.	2	4	22	10	3	1
21.	I did not receive useful academic advising.	3	17	8	4	9	1
22.	Time spent at my job detracted from achieving my educational goals at DACC.	3	11	6	10	11	1
23.	The Financial Aid Office at DACC was accessible and helpful.	5	4	7	5	20	1

		SD	D	A	SA	NA	NR
24.	The academic advising services I received at DACC were effective.	3	10	12	4	11	1
25.	The courses I took at DACC did not help me meet my career goals.	8	14	7	4	8	1
26.	The financial aid I received was adequate for tuition and fees.	5	1	5	5	24	2
27.	Parking at DACC was adequate for my needs.	6	5	17	4	9	1
28.	Bus service to and from DACC was adequate for my needs.	1	2	7	8	22	2
29.	Registration and enrollment procedures at DACC are too difficult.	8	17	6	5	5	1
30.	DACC has a good image with the public.	-	5	21	5	6	5
31.	Family-related problems caused me to leave college.	6	13	1	3	17	2
32.	The instruction at DACC did not meet my needs.	9	16	8	4	4	1
33.	I was satisfied with the student activities programs at DACC.	-	6	11	3	22	1
34.	The courses I took helped me to meet my career goals.	5	8	15	6	7	1
35.	The courses I took helped me to meet my educational goals.	3	8	20	8	3	-
36.	I was referred to too many people when I had a problem or a question.	6	11	8	5	12	-
37.	Personal problems caused me to leave college.	7	9	3	4	18	1
38.	I participated in student activities at DACC (movies, clubs, lectures, etc.)	7	6	5	-	24	

PART C.

Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding and elimination of no response percentages.

	Disagree %	Agree %	Not Applicable %
1. I was certain about my major field when I entered DACC.	29	60	10
2. I achieved my educational goals at DACC.	45	38	17
3. I was not satisfied with the quality of my courses at DACC.	62	29	10
4. Registration and enrollment procedures at DACC were easily accomplished.	31	65	5
5. I was satisfied with the teaching style of my professors at DACC.	24	73	2
6. My professors had the ability to communicate course content.	29	71	
7. My professors should have been more helpful to me.	50	43	7
8. I was satisifed with the professionalism of the faculty at DACC.	21	77	2
9. I received useful advice on what courses to take at DACC.	26	50	24
10. Financial problems caused me to leave college.	48	20	33
11. Other students or student organizations provided support that helped me as I attended DACC.	38	23	33
12. I was satisfied with quality of the career counseling services I received at DACC.	39	31	31
13. I was satisfied with the services at the:			
a. Registrar's Office	9	83	7
b. Cashier's Office	0	90	10
c. Admissions and Advising	15	74	12
d. Financial Aid Office	22	40	38
e. Library	5	69	26

	Disagree %	Agree %	Not Applicable %
f. Bookstore	5	86	10
g. Dean of Students Office	12	43	43
14. My family provided support that helped me as I attended DACC.	24	57	19
15. My friends outside of college provided support that helped me as I attended DACC.	17	55	29
16. The course offerings at DACC were not adequate.	64	31	5
17. The academic programs at DACC are too difficult.	86	7	5
18. Faculty members provided support that helped me as I attended DACC.	26	57	12
19. I managed my time well when I attended DACC.	21	67	7
20. The selection of courses was adequate for my educational program.	15	76	7
21. I did not receive useful academic advising.	47	29	21
22. Time spent at my job detracted from achieving my educational goals at DACC.	33	38	26
23. The Financial Aid Office at DACC was accessible and helpful.	22	29	48
24. The academic advising services I received at DACC were effective.	31	39	26
25. The courses I took at DACC did not help me meet my career goals.	52	27	19
26. The financial aid I received was adequate for tuition and fees.	14	24	57
27. Parking at DACC was adequate for my needs.	26	50	21
28. Bus service to and from DACC was adequate for my needs.	7	36	52

	Disagree %	Agree %	Not Applicable %
29. Registration and enrollment procedures at DACC are too difficult.	59	26	12
30. DACC had a good image with the public.	12	62	14
31. Family-related problems caused me to leave college.	45	9	40
32. The instruction at DACC did not meet my needs.	59	29	10
33. I was satisfied with the student activities programs at DACC.	14	33	52
34. The courses I took helped me to meet my career goals.	31	50	17
35. The courses I took helped me to meet my educational goals.	26	67	7
36. I was referred to too many people when I had a problem or a question.	40	31	29
37. Personal problems caused me to leave college.	38	17	43
38. I participated in student activities at DACC (movies, clubs, lectures, etc.)	31	12	57

Discussion of Findings

A plurality of respondents ranging from fifty to sixty-seven percent seem to agree that the courses taken at CCD helped to meet career and educational goals as well as needs. All of the respondents are current students. Therefore it is understandable that a high percentage, forty five percent, had not achieved their goals. The seventeen percent who found the question of having achieved educational goals not applicable, and the thirty eight percent that agreed to having achieved their educational goals suggest that goal setting may not be important or is unclear to the respondents. Their definition of goals may also vary from that commonly used at colleges; completion of a degree or certificate program on time.

The literature suggests that a high risk group of dropping out are those with unclear goals and objectives. Seventeen percent of respondents considered the question of achieving educational goals at DACC not applicable. Students may perceive goals in terms other than completing a degree, certificate, or course requirements. An effort should be made to determine what students think about when asked about educational goals.

Students are quite satisifed with the quality of instruction in terms of faculty support, course offerings, and teaching methods in a range of sixty four to seventy seven percent. However, the satisfaction regarding professors being more helpful showed a close fifty percent to forty three percent disagree/agree. while no definite conclusions can be made, it should be noted with concern because the literature suggests that student identification with a school, a positive factor in retention, is largely dependent on student perceptions on how helpful the faculty is in and out of the classroom.

The respondents found registration and enrollment procedures easily accomplished and were satsfied with services of the Registrar's office. The

services of the Admissions and Advising Office was perceived positively by seventy four percent of respondents. On examining student perceptions of advice on courses to take, career counseling, academic advising and referrals, twenty one percent to thirty one percent thought the question was not applicable. Nevertheless, seventy six percent thought the selection of courses were adequate. Why, assuming the students utilized these services, did they think the question was not applicable to them? One possibility seems to be that not all students sought career or course selection advice from this office. The students may also have a different perception of the functions of the Admissions and Advising Center from that of the College.

Financial concerns are frequently cited in the literature for attrition. This does not appear to be a major concern of respondents. Twenty four percent received adequate aid, while twenty nine percent found the Financial Aid Office helpful. Most disagreed or found the financial aid questions not applicable to them. Seventy five percent of respondents were not receiving financial aid.

The literature suggests that support influence of fellow students, friends and family are important to retention. Particularly the first and second. Perhaps, reflecting the older age of CCD students, family and friends were more important sources of support (fifty five to fifty seven percent) than fellow students and organizations.

The CCD campus services that were perceived positively were those that students frequently used. Sixty nine to ninety percent of respondents were satisfied with the registrars office, cashiers office, admissions and advising, bookstore, and library. The financial aid office and that of the Dean of Students, which are used relatively infrequently, found a positive response range of forty to forty three percent. Thirty eight to forty three percent found the question not applicable to them.

While thirty three percent of students were satisfied with student activities programs, only twelve percent participated in them. This is probably a reflection of the commuter nature of the campus and the high percentage of part-time students. Fifty two to fifty seven percent of respondents thought the question was not applicable.

Sixty seven percent of respondents worked full time and most thought they managed time well. Nevertheless there seems to be a question on whether their jobs detracted from achieving educational goals. Twenty six percent said the question was not applicable, thirty eight percent agreed that it was a detraction, while thirty three percent did not find it a detraction.

Four Models of Student Retention Programs

I. Retention Activities for Students with Undeclared Majors/Unclear Goals

Objectives:

To assist student in clarifying educational and vocational objectives.

To build student identification with CCD through increased peer, faculty, and support staff contact.

To develop necessary study habits and skills.

To identify undeclared majors.

To assist student in identifying programs, resources, and services at CCD.

Advising, career assistance, and orientation programs, in the order mentioned, have been noted as providing the best response to needs of students who have not determined career or educational goals. All three parts of the model must be applied simultaneously.

Activities:

Advising

1. Student completion of basic and vocational assessment.
2. Assign student to staff advisor. Advisor will meet with student at least twice during the semester. One of the meetings must be at mid-term to assess academic progress and to determine student commitment to educational and/or vocational goal.
3. Assign a peer advisor to student. This advisor will have contact with student every two weeks during the first eight weeks of the term. Contact may be once a month thereafter.

Career Assistance

1. Faculty, staff, and industry personnel led career exploration workshops.
2. Job placement service.

Orientation

1. Academic Survival Skills course to be offered in two formats. One will be an intensive eight week experience, the other will be over a period of a semester.

2. Orientation to CCD programs, services, and resources will be part of an Academic Survival Skills course which will develop basic study skills and habits.

Implementation of the model will require staff, scheduling, and material. Below is listed some of these needs.

Staff

1. Selection and training of peer advisors.

2. Admission/advising staff scheduling for career workshops.

3. Faculty and advising staff recruitment and training for Academic Survival Skills course responsibility.

4. Faculty, staff, and industry personnel selection and scheduling for career exploration workshops.

Scheduling

1. Scheduling of Academic Survival Skills course. Needs of evening students should be considered.

2. Creating and scheduling career exploration workshops.

Materials

1. Selection of texts, if necessary, for Academic Survival Skills course.

2. Preparation of handouts and other printed material such as student handbook.

3. Creation of a 20-30 minute video for orientation. Video will emphasize CCD programs, resources, and services.

4. Preparation/purchase of self pacing materials as a learning mode alternative and reinforcement material for Academic Survival Skills course.

Implementation Considerations

The model should be tested in the Fall 1985. The following procedures are recommended.

1. Select peer advisors from students who completed peer advising training.
2. Select, contact 30 students to volunteer to participate in implementation plan.
3. Assign a staff member to coordinate implementation efforts.
4. Schedule meeting with peer advisors, staff advisors, and students to provide overall program description, expectations, and objectives.
5. Develop evaluation criteria.
6. Schedule student vocational and basic assessment.
7. Determine career exploration workshop content, schedule, and leaders.

II. Retention Activities for Students Who are Academically Underprepared

Objectives:

To assist student in developing basic higher education literacy and academic survival skills.

To provide continuous academic support.

To determine early when students are in or heading for academic difficulties.

To build student identification with CCD.

To assist student in clarifying educational and vocational objectives.

To identify underprepared students.

Students who are academically underprepared are most likely to respond to improved academic support and learning skills program, early detection of academic problems, improved advising and counseling, in that order. The model recognizes this sequence and suggests implementation should consist of rendering services in these four areas.

Activities:

Learning Skills Program

1. Completion of basic and vocational assessment.

2. Plan to facilitate access and use of learning center.

3. Development of remedial program according to results of basic assessment.

4. Student enrollment in Academic Survival Skills course which will develop basic study skills and habits, and orientate to CCD programs, resources, and services.

Early Detection of Academic Problems

5. Development of system for faculty to notify staff advisor when student performance is dropping or is below a grade C. Staff advisor could orally contact faculty for this assessment, or faculty could be given a simple form to note student performance and suggest areas in need of assistance.

Advising/Counseling

6. Assign student to a staff and a peer advisor. Staff advisor will meet with student twice a semester, one of these meetings must be at mid-term. Peer advisor will have monthly contact with student.

7. Peer and staff advisors should communicate regularly on student progress, and problems.

8. Vocational counseling should be provided.

Model implementation will require:

Staff

1. Selection and training of peer advisors.

2. Faculty and advising staff recruitment and training for Academic Survival Skills course.

3. Obtaining faculty support for early detection of academic problem system.

4. Selection of a vocational counselor.

Scheduling

1. Scheduling of Academic Survival course. Needs of evening students should be considered.

Materials

Preparation/purchase of self pacing materials as a learning mode alternative and reinforcement material for Academic Survival Skills course.

The model can be tested as early as Spring 1986. The following procedures are recommended.

1. Select peer advisors from students who completed peer advising training.
2. Select, contact 30 students to volunteer to participate in implementation plan.
3. Assign staff member to coordinate implementation efforts.
4. Schedule meeting with peer advisors, staff advisors, and students to describe program, expectations, and objectives.
5. Develop evaluation criteria.
6. Schedule student vocational and basic assessment.

III. Retention Activities for New Students to College

Objectives:

To assist student in developing basic higher education literacy and academic survival skills.

To assist student in identifying CCD programs, resources, and services which can assist in attaining career and academic objectives.

To provide continuous academic support.

To build student identification with CCD.

New students will benefit most from orientation programs, learning skills programs, academic support systems, and improved advising.

Activities:

Orientation

1. Orientation sessions to programs, resources, and services at CCD.

Learning Skills Program

1. Student completion of basic and vocational assessments.

2. Development of remedial programs according to results of basic assessment.

3. Student enrollment in Academic Survival Skills course.

4. Student familiarity with Learning Lab services.

Improved Advising

1. Assign student to peer and staff advisors. Peer advisor will have contact with student every two weeks during the first eight weeks of term. Staff advisor will meet with student three times during the term, one of these times should be at mid-term.

Implementation Considerations

The model implementation should provide services in these four areas and consideration of the following needs.

Staff

1. Selection and training of peer advisors.

2. Faculty and advising staff recruitment and training for Academic Survival Skills course responsibility.

Scheduling

1. Scheduling of Academic Survival Skills course. Needs of evening students should be considered.

Materials

1. Selection of texts, if necessary, for Academic Skills Survival course.

2. Preparation of handouts and other printed material such as the student handbook.

3. Creation of a 20-30 minute video for orientation. Video will emphasize CCD programs and services.

4. Preparation/purchase of self pacing materials as a learning mode alternative and reinforcement for Academic Survival Skills course.

The implementation procedures suggested for pre-testing model for undeclared majors should be attempted in Spring 1986.

IV. Retention Activities for Returning Adults

Objectives:

To assist student in identifying programs, services, and resources at CCD useful in attaining educational and career objectives.

To develop student self confidence in relation to academics.

To provide student access to peers who understand re-entry problems and experiences.

To provide opportunities for student to explore vocational/career alternatives commensurate with their skills, abilities, and interest.

To provide opportunities and skills for preparing for job market.

To train faculty on special needs of adult students, effective teaching approaches, counseling/advising techniques.

Re-entry adult programs for retention are most successful when they provide special orientation, peer counseling, career assistance, and faculty-staff development.

Activities:

Special Orientation

1. Orientation sessions/workshops to CCD programs, services, and resources. Particular attention should be given to full time working students who attend classes in the evening.

2. Special workshops on topics such as values, clarification, motivation, self-esteem, studying with younger students, etc.

Peer Counseling

3. Peer counseling system whereby other adults who have re-entry experience serve as the student's mentor during the first term of classes.

Career Assistance

4. Career exploration program focusing on needs of adults re-entering the job market and school after a five year absence.

Faculty-Staff Development

5. Faculty and staff workshops on teaching approaches suitable for adults, advising and counseling techniques successful with this re-entry population.

Implementation Considerations

Implementation needs are:

Staff

1. Trained peer advisors who are also re-entry adults.

2. Admission/advising staff for career workshops.

Scheduling

1. Creating and scheduling career exploration workshops.

Materials

1. Same as for model/underprepared students.

I recommend pretesting in the Spring 1986 using the procedures outlined under model for undeclared majors.

Recommendations for Future Study

The student population at the Community College of Denver is very mobile. Survey research requiring mailings and telephone interviews or follow-up is difficult to conduct with this high degree of transiency. Therefore, research utilizing these techniques should be conducted while the student is still attending classes. The College should also consider updating student address records, at least once after every registration term in order to facilitate student follow-up.

The Denver Auraria Community College Retention Survey conducted in July 1985 should be repeated. The nature of the survey makes it possible to select a random sample of 250 students each term, beginning in the Fall 1985. The process of gathering this data should be continuous. The survey should be done each semester during the period of faculty evaluations.

Part-time students are increasing at the Community College of Denver. Very little is known about this population. A study should be conducted to determine this population's needs and interests, to compare their interests with those of full-time students, and to assess the College's responsiveness to both student populations.

Concluding Statement

The success of retention strategies is largely dependent upon the commitment of the institution to this issue. Leadership is required from the highest office of the college with the entire academic community aware of the president's commitment to the program. In addition to the leadership exhibited through the assignment of financial and personnel resources for retention functions there are CCD image building activities which can contribute to retention efforts.

The image of a college is positively correlated to student persistence. The Community College of Denver should assess its programs and services and identify the type of students it can best serve. This process will provide a foundation of a communications campaign. We suggest the campaign be conducted via electronic and print media as well as increased CCD personnel visibility in the community.

Retention efforts should be viewed as a function of classified, support, and academic staff. The president should make them aware of the importance to the vitality of the college and the commitment of his office to the objective of helping students achieve educational and career objectives at CCD.

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